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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 BOGOTA 001750

SIPDIS

FOR P, WHA, WHA/AND. NSC FOR INTER-AMERICAN DIRECTORATE

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [CO](#)

SUBJECT: UNDER SECRETARY GROSSMAN MEETS FOREIGN MINISTER BARCO

Classified By: Ambassador William B. Wood for reasons: 1.4 (b) & (d)

1. (C) SUMMARY. Foreign Minister Carolina Barco told U/S Grossman on February 14 that the GOC was satisfied with the international donors conference in Cartagena, in particular with USAID Administrator's speech and the NGO declaration. The latter would be a solid foundation on which to deepen GOC collaboration with civil society. Barco had spent the day preparing for her Feb. 15 trip to Caracas with President Uribe. Like the President (septel), she too was pessimistic. The GOC was putting the final touches on 17 new extradition requests to Venezuela. Problems continued on the communique, with the GOV balking at any references to terrorism and ongoing bilateral mechanisms. U/S Grossman urged Barco to hold firm on the need for an explicit commitment to fight terrorism from Chavez. Barco said the GOC continued to look for mechanisms to build confidence and bind Venezuela to the fight against terrorism. Barco had conferred with Spanish officials on counter-terrorism mechanisms on their borders with France and Morocco, to explore whether this was something Uribe could suggest to Chavez. The Spanish told Barco that Chavez was trying to improve relations with PM Zapatero; the GOS was receptive as long as it was convinced Chavez was not engaged in activities to destabilize the region. GOS officials expressed particular concern about El Salvador and Nicaragua. The U/S, Ambassador and FM welcomed press statements from Paraguay regarding the links between the FARC and the kidnapping of former President Cubas' daughter. This made the FARC an international problem, subjecting nations to international commitments including relevant Security Council resolutions. Barco raised recent reports of Russian arms sales to Venezuela, expressing concern some would find their way to the FARC. Finally, Barco thanked U/S Grossman for the level of support for Colombia in the Administration's FY 2006 budget request. U/S Grossman stressed the strong USG commitment to the GOC, despite competing priorities. To sustain this support, he encouraged the GOC to adopt a good demobilization bill and continue its efforts to improve the human rights situation, including investigation and punishment of those responsible for the Mapiiripan massacre and the Arauca killings, as well as resolving the case against Lt. Colonel Orozco. END SUMMARY.

2. (C) Under Secretary Grossman and the Ambassador met Foreign Minister Carolina Barco and Vice Minister Camilo Reyes late on February 14. U/S Grossman opened by expressing U.S. gratitude for GOC efforts to free the three U.S. hostages. He also expressed condolences for COLMIL losses in recent FARC attacks, and for the emergency situation caused by recent flooding and loss of life in the Santander and Norte de Santander departments. He told Barco the U.S. would contribute \$50,000 toward the relief effort as a sign of solidarity with the GOC.

3. (C) U/S Grossman briefed the FM on his meetings with President Uribe, Senator Rafael Pardo and NGOs earlier in the day (septels), noting Uribe's pessimism about the upcoming meeting with Chavez, the success of the Cartagena conference (including USAID Administrator Natsios's speech), and U.S. views on the demobilization law which the Congress was scheduled to discuss in special session beginning February 15. On the law, U/S Grossman stressed the importance the U.S. placed on a strong law that provided for peace with justice and dismantled the paramilitaries.

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CARTAGENA CONFERENCE  
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4. (C) Barco said the GOC was pleased with the Cartagena conference, underscoring her delight with Natsios' remarks during the intergovernmental session, and satisfaction with the NGO declaration (septel). The GOC had worked hard to make the GOC-NGO dialogue a constructive one. GOC officials now believed that there was a stronger basis on which to accelerate and deepen collaboration with civil society.

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GETTING READY FOR CHAVEZ  
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5. (C) Barco apologized for not traveling to Cartagena with

U/S Grossman to see Uribe, explaining that she had spent the day preparing for the upcoming encounter with Chavez. The GOC was preparing 17 new extradition requests for terrorists operating in Venezuela. She had met the Spanish Cooperation Minister to explore whether counter-terrorism mechanisms put in place with France and Morocco could be applicable to the situation with Venezuela. For example, the French and Spanish had exchanged judges and other Ministry of Interior personnel which had enhanced communication and coordination when information on ETA movements emerged. Barco said the GOC continued to look for ways to increase the level of confidence with the GOV and secure a stronger commitment to fight against terrorism. The GOC was also trying to secure better mil-to-mil cooperation on border issues, including the possibility of personnel exchanges, but the GOV remained reticent to collaborate on issues dealing with security. Barco also reported that the Spanish told her Chavez was making a particular effort to reach out to the Zapatero government on a variety of issues. The Spanish were willing to engage Chavez, she said, but only if they were convinced he would refrain from destabilizing actions in the region. In that regard, the Spanish expressed particular concern about El Salvador and Nicaragua.

16. (C) Barco reviewed the difficulties with the communiqu she had been negotiating with her Venezuelan counterpart, noting that the GOV continued to resist any references to terrorism and was now questioning every bilateral mechanism in operation. The GOV was willing to say it would fight against delinquents but not terrorists. The reference to terrorism and the status of bilateral mechanisms would remain in brackets in the text for the two presidents to negotiate. U/S Grossman suggested that if these issues could not be resolved, no communiqu could be a better solution. In particular, if the GOV continued to resist an explicit reference to terrorism, Uribe would be free to publicly state the problem and highlight Chavez' unwillingness to commit to fighting terrorism.

17. (C) The U/S, Ambassador and FM all welcomed press statements from Paraguay earlier in the day regarding the links between the FARC and the kidnappers (and killers) of the daughter of former President Cubas. U/S Grossman underscored the importance of identifying the international aspects of FARC activities which made the problem subject to international agreements, including Security Council resolution 1373 and others that committed nations to fight international terrorism.

18. (C) Drawing on the earlier discussion with President Uribe over which neighboring countries were pro-actively fighting against terrorism (septel), U/S Grossman asked for Barco's views on Brazil. Barco responded that Brazil did not/not touch the issue of terrorism during discussions on the row between Colombia and Venezuela. Rather, President Lula and FM Amorin simply continued to reiterate Chavez's interest in resolving the situation. Nonetheless, Barco stressed that she maintains a constructive relationship with her Brazilian counterpart and that "he never closed the door" during the crisis. She also noted that Lula had prevented FARC participation in this year's "Davos alternative meeting" in Porto Alegre. Regarding Colombia's other neighbors, Barco emphasized that all were subject to retaliation from the FARC but Peru had been and continued to be the most collaborative. The Ambassador noted President Uribe's interest in exploring with President Gutierrez of Ecuador and others the possibility of their making public statements against terrorism, if not against the FARC.

19. (C) Barco also reported that Minister of Defense Uribe had had a good meeting with Secretary Rumsfeld in Munich but was unsuccessful in arranging a meeting with his Russian counterpart. The GOC remained concerned about reports of Russian arm sales to Venezuela, noting that some of these weapons would likely end up in the hands of FARC soldiers. U/S Grossman agreed and said the U.S. had tried to enlighten the GORF about Chavez intentions and actions and dissuade Moscow from making the sale, but to no avail.

#### ----- BUDGET/HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUES -----

110. (C) Barco expressed gratitude for the Colombian portion of the Administration's FY2006 budget presented to the U.S. Congress on February 7. The GOC was making progress, had a ways to go, and counted on continued U.S. backing. U/S Grossman underscored the USG commitment to the GOC, emphasizing its ongoing moral, political and financial support. The Ambassador noted that the underlying consensus of support for Colombia in Washington was holding, despite competing priorities such as Iraq, Afghanistan, and various domestic issues. The FM asked whether the request for Colombia would get through the Congress. U/S Grossman responded that the Administration had put an honest budget forward and would fight for it. That said, as budgets got tighter, the GOC had to persevere in making the case and show

forward movement. In particular, the GOC had to get a good demobilization bill adopted and continue its efforts to improve the human rights situation. This should include investigation and punishment of those responsible for the massacre in Mapiripan and the killings of the three trade unionists in Arauca, resolution of the case against Lt. Colonel Orozco, and progress on other outstanding human rights cases.

11. (U) This message has been cleared by U/S Grossman.  
DRUCKER